

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
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ALSO FOR USEC;

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ENRG, EEC, BE
SUBJECT: BELGIAN VIEWS ON EC COMMISSION PETROLEUM
PROPOSALS

REF: BRUSSELS 2004

1. IN COURSE OF DISCUSSION ON ENERGY MATTERS WITH EMBOFF
MARCH 3, MARCEL FREROTTE, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF ENERGY
ADMINISTRATION IN MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS PROVIDED
FOLLOWING INFORMATION WHICH MAY BE OF SOME BACKGROUND USE
TO POSTS FOLLOWING COMMISSION'S EFFORTS TO AMELIORATE
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THE COMMUNITY'S OIL MARKETING PROBLEMS.

2. DANISH PROPOSAL EMBODYING COMMISSION'S MEASURES TO
RESOLVE COMMUNITY'S PETROLEUM MARKETING DIFFICULTIES WILL
BE TABLED FOR DISCUSSION AT MARCH 9 COREPER MEETING.
DANES, ACCORDING TO FREROTTE, WANT TO MAKE ENERGY THE KEY
ISSUE OF THEIR SIX-MONTH PRESIDENCY, AND INTEND TO PRESS

IN COREPER FOR A DECISION ON BASIS OF COMMISSION PROPOSALS. IF COREPER MEETING NEXT WEEK SHOWS THAT MEMBER STATES ARE NOT PREPARED TO REACH AGREEMENT ON BASIS OF COMMISSION PROPOSALS, THEN DANES WILL NOT RAISE ISSUE AT MARCH 21 ENERGY COUNCIL MEETING, PREFERRING TO LET ISSUE LIE DORMANT FOR A WHILE, APPARENTLY UNTIL SOME SORT OF CONSENSUS CAN BE REACHED.

3. FREROTTE THINKS IT MIGHTY UNLIKELY THAT COREPER WILL BUY OFF ON THE COMMISSION'S PROPOSALS. ITALIANS DO NOT THINK PROPOSED MEASURES GO NEARLY FAR ENOUGH, WHILE UK IS DEAD SET AGAINST ANY RESTRICTIONS ON ITS ABILITY TO PROMOTE NEW REFINERIES FOR NORTH SEA OIL. ITALY AND UK ALSO ARE FAR APART ON QUESTION OF REFINED PRODUCT IMPORTS FROM THIRD COUNTRIES.

4. BELGIAN POSITION ON BOTH ISSUES IS MORE NUANCED, ACCORDING TO FREROTTE. BELGIANS GENERALLY AGREE WITH THE EC PROPOSALS, BUT PREFER SOME KIND OF "NON-CONSTRAINING" SOLUTION TO DISCOURAGE NEW OR ADD-ON REFINING CAPACITY. THE COMPANIES, THE GOB BELIEVES, SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO TAKE THE NECESSARY CAPACITY REDUCTION MEASURES THEMSELVES, NOT DIRECTED TO DO SO BY THE COMMISSION OR BY NATIONAL AUTHORITIES. BELGIANS ALSO INTEND TO URGE UK TO MODERATE ITS OPPOSITION TO COMMISSION EFFORTS ON THE REFINERY ISSUE, WHICH FREROTTE CHARACTERIZED AS "ANTI-COMMUNITY" LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IN SPIRIT. ON PRODUCT LIMITATION, FREROTTE SAID BELGIUM WILL SUPPORT MEASURES TO LIMIT IMPORTS OF REFINED PRODUCTS FROM THIRD COUNTRIES TO THE EXTENT LEGALLY POSSIBLE. CHAMBERS

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